

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSM-03

DHA-02 ACDA-07 /105 W

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R 080900Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5148

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 1348

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SO, ET, UR

SUBJ: COLIN LEGUM ON GREATER SOMALIA, ETHIOPIA AND SOVIET UNION

SUMMARY: WE DISCUSSED PROBLEMS IN HORN WITH BRITISH JOURNALIST COLIN LEGUM AUGUST 7. LEGUM RECENTLY ARRIVED MOGADISCIO FROM TEL AVIV AND HOPES TO SEE SIAD BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR KHARTOUM (VIA CAIRO) AUGUST 10. LEGUM HAS FOLLOWED DEVELOPMENTS IN SOMALIA SINCE MID-FIFTIES AND HIS CURRENT VISIT IS AN ATTEMPT TO FIND ANSWER TO SEVERAL KEY QUESTIONS, INCLUDING MEANING OF NEW WESTERN SOMALI FRONT; SOVIET INTENTIONS IN ETHIOPIA AND FUTURE OF SOVIET/SOMALI RELATIONS. IN MOST CASES, HE HAS YET TO DRAW ANY FINAL CONCLUSIONS. HIS COMMENTS WERE NEVERTHELESS USEFUL.
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END SUMMARY.

1. WESTERN SOMALI LIBERATION FRONT: LEGUM TALKED WITH LEADERS OF WESTERN SOMALI LIBERATION FRONT (WSLF) IN MOGADISCIO AUGUST 6. HE WAS STAGGERED BY THEIR TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AGAINST ETHIOPIA. HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY SOMALI AMBASSADOR IN LONDON PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE THAT NEW

CONCEPT OF WESTERN SOMALIA HAD EMERGED OVER PAST YEAR BUT NOTHING PREPARED HIM FOR WHAT HE HEARD. WSLF MAPS SHOWN HIM AT MOGADISCIO HQS LAID CLAIM TO NOT ONLY OGADEN REGIONS IN HARERGE BUT TO BALE, SIDAMO AND ARUSSI AS WELL, EXTENDING INTO AWASH VALLEY AND TOWN OF NAZARETH ONLY SIXTY MILES FROM ADDIS ABABA. LEGUM HAD UNDERSTOOD OF COURSE THAT NON-SOMALIS WERE INVOLVED IN OROMO LIBERATION FRONT BUT HE WAS TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR EXTENT TO WHICH THESE GROUPS WERE ACTIVELY A PART OF WSLF IN MOGADISCIO OR FOR DEPTH OF THEIR CONVICTION THAT CURRENT MILITARY VICTORIES IN OGADEN WOULD IN TIME SCALE THE SHOAN MOUNTAINS AS WELL.

2. ON AUGUST 6, LEGUM SPENT THREE HOURS WITH GENERAL WAKHA GUTTO AT WSLF HQS IN MOGADISCIO (GUTTO IS LEADER OF OROMO LIBERATION FRONT AND CHAIRMAN OF WSLF POLITBURO). AT CONCLUSION OF TALKS, DURING WHICH WAKHA GUTTO SHOWED HIM MAPS DEFINING NEW WESTERN SOMALIA BORDERS ALONG AWASH VALLEY, LEGUM ASKED HIM WHETHER HE WAS FULLY PREPARED TO COMMIT HIS PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATION IN A GREATER SOMALILAND. AFTER SOME DISCUSSION WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF POLITBURO, WAKHA GUTTO SAID THAT THIS WAS DECISION ONLY HIS PEOPLE COULD MAKE ONCE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-DETERMINATION.

3. LEGUM BELIEVES THAT WSLF CLAIMS WHOLLY UNREALISTIC. WHILE HE BELIEVES THAT MENGISTU REGIME, EDU AND OTHERS
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MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO OGADEN, CEDING JIGJIGA AND THE HAUD TO SOMALIA (HE HAS DOUBTS ABOUT OGADEN TERRITORIES FURTHER TO THE SOUTH NEAR GODE, HOWEVER) ANY SOMALI CLAIMS TO BALE, ARUSSI, ETC. WERE PREPOSTEROUS. YET HE WAS AMAZED AT THE EXTENT TO WHICH MANY INTELLIGENT, SOBER-MINDED SOMALIS HAD WHOLLY SUCCUMBED TO THE INTOXICATION OF THE CURRENT MILITARY SUCCESS IN THE OGADEN AND TO CONVICTION THAT VICTORIES WOULD SWEEP THEM UP THE MOUNTAIN AND TO SUBURBS OF ADDIS ITSELF. SOMALIA SEEMED TO BELIEVE ITS HOUR HAD COME.

4. LEGUM ASKED WHETHER SIAD WAS SERIOUS IN HIS BELIEF THAT THESE NON-SOMALI PEOPLES COULD BE INCLUDED IN A WESTERN SOMALIA WHICH WOULD BE PART OF HIS OWN SOMALI NATION OR THAT NON-SOMALI TERRITORIES COULD ACTUALLY BE LIBERATED FROM ETHIOPIA. MAGNITUDE OF SIAD'S AMBITIONS SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT SOMALIA MIGHT BE PUTTING TOGETHER NEW NATIONAL ECONOMIC UNIT, COMPLETE WITH GAS AND PERHAPS OIL RESERVES, ADDITIONAL AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL, ETC., AS INDUCEMENT FOR WESTERN SUPPORT AND ALTERNATIVE TO A DIMINISHED, MARXIST ETHIOPIA (HE HAS

ASKED GSDR PLANNING OFFICIAL JOKINGLY IF SOMALI FIVE-YEAR PLAN
NOW BEING REVISED WITH THAT IN MIND).

5. WE SAID THAT THIS WAS DOUBTFUL. WE THOUGHT SIAD'S
IMMEDIATE AMBITIONS MORE POLITICAL THAN ECONOMIC, HIS CLAIMS
TO ARUSSI AND SIDAMO MORE TACTICAL THAN SUBSTANTIVE. IN ADDITION
TO LIBERATING OGADEN, SIAD ALSO OBSESSED WITH IDEA OF SHOWING SOVIET
UNION THAT MENGISTU REGIME WAS UNWORTHY OF SOVIET SUPPORT. IN
BRINGING AS MANY NON-SOMALI ETHIOPIANS AS POSSIBLE INTO
WSLF TENT, SIAD WAS ALSO DEMONSTRATING TO MOSCOW THAT
MENGISTU, BY CONTINUING TO COLONIZE THE ABYSSINIAN
LOWLANDS AS HIS COLONIALIST PREDECESSORS IN ADDIS HAD DONE,
WAS AS MUCH AS IMPERIALIST AS HAILE SELASSIE AND THAT HIS
SOCIALIST CLAIMS WERE FALSE. THIS WAS SIAD'S POLICY LINE.
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6. LEGUM SAID THAT IN THAT REGARD HE HAD BEEN STRUCK BY
SIAD'S RECOURSE TO LENIN IN A RECENT SPEECH CRITICIZING THE
ETHIOPIAN REGIME AND USSR. LIKE MAO, SIAD HAD ATTEMPTED
TO GIVE MOSCOW AN IDEOLOGICAL LESSON BY CITING LENIN'S
1896 REMARKS ABOUT RIGHT OF NATIONALITIES TO SELF-
DETERMINATION. WSLF WAS INCORPORATING DIVERSE NATIONALITIES
AND HE THOUGHT IT SIGNIFICANT THAT SIAD ATTEMPTING GIVE
IDEOLOGICAL LESSON TO RUSSIANS.

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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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7. SOVIET SUPPORT FOR ETHIOPIA: LEGUM SAID HE WAS UNSURE OF STRENGTH OF SOVIET SUPPORT FOR MENGISTU REGIME. HE AGREED THAT ETHIOPIA WAS PERHAPS MOST COMPLEX NATION IN AFRICA AND THAT OVER NEXT DECADE NO CENTRAL AUTHORITY IN ADDIS COULD HOPE TO CONTROL ITS ECONOMIC, POLITICAL OR SOCIAL EVOLUTION. THAT BEING THE CASE, HE FAILED TO UNDERSTAND WHY MOSCOW HAD COMMITTED ITSELF TO MENGISTU WHEN NATION WAS IN STATE OF COLLAPSE AND ERITREA IRRETRIEVABLY LOST. HE SAID OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS -- INCLUDING NYERERE -- HAD ASKED HIM SAME QUESTION AND HAD CONCLUDED THAT MOSCOW HAD MISCALCULATED FROM IGNORANCE. LEGUM WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH THIS ANSWER AND SENSED THAT SOVIET UNION WAS AWARE OF SOMETHING IN ADDIS WHICH US AND OTHERS WERE UNAWARE.
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8. WE SAID THAT LEGUM OVERESTIMATED SUBTLETY OF SOVIET PERCEPTION. MOSCOW SAW IN ETHIOPIA AN UNPARALLELED POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY IN AFRICA AND WAS CONFIDENT THAT ITS OWN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SOLUTIONS COULD MANAGE THE ETHIOPIAN CASE. SOVIETS DID NOT SEE THINGS OTHER NATIONS SAW IN ADDIS; ON CONTRARY, THEIR FAITH IN SUPERIORITY OF THEIR SOLUTIONS HAD BLINDED THEM TO PROBLEMS WHICH MIGHT DISCOURAGE MORE SOBER OR SENSITIVE OBSERVERS. MORE- OVER, PERHAPS ETHIOPIA'S FEUDAL PAST, INCLUDING ITS LAND- LESS PEASANTRY, HAD STRUCK SYMPATHETIC RESPONSE WITH SOVIET UNION, WHICH DISCERNED SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HAILE SELASSIE'S ETHIOPIA AND CZARIST RUSSIA. IN ANY CASE, MOSCOW BELIEVED ETHIOPIANS REVOLUTION MANAGEABLE.

9. WE SAID THAT SIAD HAD PROBABLY UNDERESTIMATED EXTENT OF SOVIET COMMITMENT TO ETHIOPIA. WE TENDED TO BELIEVE SOVIET PLEDGE TO BACK ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION RAN FAIRLY DEEP AND WOULD NOT BE DETERRED BY SIAD'S MANEUVERINGS OR MOMENTARY MILITARY OR POLITICAL SETBACKS.

10. LEGUM HADN'T YET MADE UP HIS MIND. QUESTION OF STRENGTH OF SOVIET COMMITMENT TO MENGISTU REGIME IN ADDIS WAS CRUCIAL QUESTION IN HORN AT PRESENT AND IN

HIS ABILITY TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION MANY OTHER ANSWERS
WOULD ALSO FALL INTO PLACE.

11. SOMALI-SOVIET RELATIONS. ON BALANCE, LEGUM GUESSED
THAT SIAD WOULD MANAGE TO RETAIN HIS SOVIET TIES,
ALTHOUGH FUTURE WAS CERTAINLY UNCLEAR AT THIS POINT.
HE REGARDED SIAD AS NOMADIC TRADER INTERESTED IN GETTING
"AS MANY EGGS AS POSSIBLE INTO HIS BASKET". PRIOR TO
LEAVING LONDON, SOMALI AMBASSADOR HAD TOLD HIM RUSSIANS
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WERE FINISHED IN SOMALIA BUT THIS CLEARLY NOT RPT NOT
THE CASE. YET SIAD WOULD HAVE TO RESPOND IN SOME WAY TO
ARABS AND WEST IF HE WAS TO FIND SUPPORT AND HE WONDERED
IF SOVIET UNION WOULD BE WILLING TO WITHDRAW FROM BERBERA
AND YET MAINTAIN THEIR MILITARY SUPPORT FOR SIAD. WE
GUESSED THAT THEY WOULD. WE AGREED WITH LEGUM IN
CONCLUSION THAT FUTURE WAS EXTREMELY UNCERTAIN.
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